



EXPEDITION TOURER/COMMUTER, £3600

# Woodrup Chimera BD

Editor **Dan Joyce** reviews a custom-built expedition tourer/commuter with a belt drive, Rohloff hub and S&S couplings

IN A market dominated by bikes built in the Far East, there's still room for framebuilders like Woodrup Cycles offering bespoke UK craftsmanship. The Chimera is a go-anywhere machine, the Greek myth name reflecting 'its different stands of DNA'. So did it roar like a lion or get my goat? Ultimately, both.

Each Chimera is built to order, whether frame-and-fork only or complete bike. It's designed with a splittable chain-stay so that you can use a belt-drive. You don't have to: you choose the drivetrain, wheel size, brake type, and more. Since the test bike is a demo model, it's not built to my preferences; I'd want a do-it-all bike



**1** If you never want to be separated from your best bike, S&S couplings let you separate the frame

**2** Quiet, oil-free, but not as efficient. I'd want a chain for anything other than short trips

to be more like Salsa's Fargo.

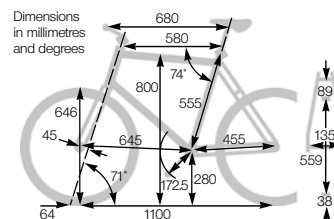
The Reynolds 725 steel frame is very nicely made, and evidently plenty stiff enough for Gates to approve it for use with their belt drive. Sliding dropouts offer drivetrain versatility, and it's good to see pannier rack eyelets sized for stronger M6 bolts.

Optional S&S couplings, which add £540, let you dismantle your bike for free carriage on 'planes and trains. Given enough spanner time, the Chimera will fit in a case measuring 66×66×25.4cm (e.g. an S&S Machine Backpack Case, costing around £185).

## Town and country

I enjoyed riding the Chimera around town. The belt drive didn't slip, was nice and quiet, and of course didn't need oiling, even after daily downpours. There's a good case for more town bikes using belts like this.

Longer rides, especially those without heavy panniers, were a drag. I reckon it lost 0.5-1mph to a comparable tourer with 700C wheels and derailleurs. That's partly the smaller (26in) wheels and partly the drivetrain. How much is the belt and how much the hub, I can't say. Riding felt fairly efficient when pedalling briskly in gears 8-14. On hills, pedalling with a slower cadence, more torque,



## WOODRUP CHIMERA

**Price:** £3600 as tested (frame & fork from £1170)

**Weight:** 13.1kg/28.8lb (without rack)

**Sizes:** any

**Frame and fork:** Reynolds 725 chromoly, sliding dropouts, S&S couplings. Reynolds R butted twin-crown fork.

**Wheels:** 38-559 Specialized Nimbus Armadillo tyres, Mavic XC717 rims, 32 spokes (front ×3, rear ×2), Hope Mono Pro 3 front hub, Rohloff Speedhub rear.

**Transmission:** no pedals, Shimano 105 chainset with 50T Gates Carbon Drive, Shimano external BB, Gates belt, 19T sprocket, 'snubber' for belt drive. Rohloff Speedhub and shifter. 14-speed, 19-98 in.

**Braking:** Shimano Deore V-brakes

**Steering and Seating:** Ergon GP3 grips, Easton EA50 bar, 90mm Easton stem, 27.2mm Easton seatpost, Brooks B17

**Accessories:** SKS mudguards

**Contact:** woodrupcycles.com

and an extra set of epicyclic gears (the Rohloff hub uses a reduction gear for 1-7), the increased effort was irritating.

This doesn't bother lots of Rohloff Speedhub owners, who rightly praise the £900 hub for its fit-and-forget reliability. I like that too on an expedition-type bike but I'd limit the efficiency losses by using a chain and by risking a smaller chainring/bigger sprocket ratio than the 2.35:1 minimum Rohloff recommend, so as to spend more time in the nicer top seven gears.

In conclusion, I'd happily consider Woodrup if I wanted a frame built to my specifications; they know their craft. But I'd only use this particular Chimera as an extraordinarily expensive town bike. Your mileage may vary.

## Also consider



### 1) Thorn Nomad £2199+

Sturdy 26in-wheel steel expedition bike with chain-driven Rohloff hub and lots of options – including S&S couplings. Reviewed June/July 2010. [thorncycles.co.uk](http://thorncycles.co.uk)



### 2) Salsa Fargo 3 £1300

Cheaper version of the 29in-wheeled roughstuff tourer reviewed in Oct/Nov 2012. Bar-end 27-speed MTB gearing (SLX/Deore) and Avid BB7 brakes. [ison-distribution.com](http://ison-distribution.com)